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UNCLAS STATE 297649

GENEVA FOR RMA BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEC NAIROBI FOR REFCOORD

E.O. 12356: N/A

TAGS: PREF RW BY CG TZ UG

SUBJECT: REGIONAL RWANDA/BURUNDI REFUGEE CONFERENCE

REF: (A) 94 KAMPALA 8490, (B) 94 STATE 287464

1. SUMMARY. DEPARTMENT IS CONCERNED THAT MOMENTUM IS BEING LOST ON CONVENING A REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON RWANDAN/BURUNDI REFUGEES. THE CONCEPT OF A CONFERENCE THAT WOULD FOCUS ON THE DIPLOMATIC AND PRACTICAL STEPS NEEDED TO PERMIT LARGE-SCALE REPATRIATION OF RWANDAN AND BURUNDI REFUGEES (E.G., SECURITY IN REFUGEE CAMPS AND LAND TENURE ISSUES) BUT THAT WOULD ALSO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REGIONAL PLAYERS TO DISCUSS THE INESCAPABLE POLITICAL CONTEXT (E.G., THE NEED TO AVOID RETURN TO OPEN WARFARE) HAS BEEN GENERALLY ACCEPTED BY AFRICAN REGIONAL PLAYERS AND DONORS. SUCH A CONFERENCE WOULD BE DISTINCT FROM, BUT CLEARLY AFFECTED BY, ANY ADDITIONAL REGIONAL SUMMITS SUCH AS THAT SUGGESTED BY THE UGANDANS (REF A). THIS MESSAGE SOLICITS ADDRESSEES HELP IN ACCELERATING THE PREPARATORY WORK SO THAT A FRUITFUL PLENARY CONFERENCE COULD BE HELD NO LATER THAN EARLY 1995. END SUMMARY.

2. AS ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE, THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF DISCUSSION DURING THE PAST FEW MONTHS ABOUT THE NEED FOR A REGIONAL CONFERENCE TO ADDRESS RESOLUTION OF RWANDAN AND BURUNDI REFUGEE ISSUES FROM A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE. THE OAU CALLED FOR SUCH A CONFERENCE AT ITS SUMMIT IN JUNE IN TUNIS, IT WAS DISCUSSED FURTHER IN ADDIS ON THE MARGINS OF THE OAU/UNHCR REFUGEE SYMPOSIUM IN SEPTEMBER, AND WAS AGAIN RAISED AT A RWANDA MEETING ON THE MARGINS

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: HARMON E KIRBY  
DATE/CASE ID: 08 MAY 2007 200103014

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OF UNHCR'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EXCOM) MEETING IN GENEVA IN EARLY OCTOBER, AND IS ENDORSED IN A DRAFT UNGA RESOLUTION ON THE SITUATION IN BURUNDI. IT APPEARS THAT THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT BY THE AFRICAN REGIONAL ACTORS AND DONORS ON THE NEED TO HOLD SUCH A CONFERENCE. BURUNDI APPEARS COMMITTED TO THE ROLE OF HOST (REF B). WHAT IS NOW NEEDED IS FOR SERIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS TO BEGIN IN ORDER TO BRING THIS IDEA TO FRUITION.

3. THIS CONFERENCE WOULD DEAL WITH THE REGIONAL COOPERATION AND DONOR SUPPORT NEEDED TO ACHIEVE APPROPRIATE SOLUTIONS FOR ALL THE NEW AND OLD REFUGEES FROM RWANDA AND BURUNDI. WHILE IT WOULD NOT OFFICIALLY ADDRESS ISSUES OF PEACE AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION — TOPICS THAT MIGHT BE COVERED IN A REGIONAL SUMMIT AS SUGGESTED BY UGANDA (REF A) — A REFUGEE CONFERENCE COULD NOT ESCAPE THE FACT THAT ALL ASPECTS OF REFUGEES ARE POLITICAL. NO ACTION SUCH AS PROVIDING SECURITY IN CAMPS IS NEUTRAL OR WITHOUT POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS. IT IS HOPED THAT POSITIVE COOPERATIVE WORK ON REFUGEE ISSUES WOULD BE REFLECTED IN PROGRESS TOWARD NATIONAL RECONCILIATION.

4. AT THE ADDIS MEETING, OAU SYG SALIM SALIM STATED THAT A PREPARATORY COMMITTEE NEEDED TO BE ESTABLISHED IMMEDIATELY AND THAT THE OAU AND UNHCR WOULD SERVE AS COORDINATORS OF THE CONFERENCE. THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE WAS TO HAVE CONVENED WITHIN A FEW WEEKS OF THE ADDIS MEETING TO DECIDE THE SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE, LEVEL OF REPRESENTATION, ETC. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THIS PREPARATORY COMMITTEE HAS YET TO BE ESTABLISHED. (COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT CREATION OF THIS PREPARATORY COMMITTEE IS DISTINCT FROM THE WORK TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY THE "JOINT COMMISSION", ALSO AGREED TO IN ADDIS, WHICH UNDERTOOK TO DEFINE THE TECHNICAL CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR REPATRIATION AND WHICH MET IN GENEVA ON THE MARGINS OF THE EXCOM. END COMMENT.)

5. FOR ADDIS: EMBASSY IS REQUESTED TO APPROACH APPROPRIATE OAU OFFICIALS AND ASK THEM HOW THEY ENVISION PROCEEDING WITH A PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE CONFERENCE. WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE OAU TO MOVE EXPEDITIOUSLY ON PLANNING FOR THIS CONFERENCE WHICH SHOULD TAKE PLACE EARLY IN 1995. (COMMENT. ALTHOUGH THE TUNIS SUMMIT CALLED FOR A CONFERENCE BY THE END OF 1994, THAT IS CLEARLY UNACHIEVABLE. FRUITFUL WORK BY THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE SHOULD BE COMPLETED IN 1994, HOWEVER. END COMMENT.)

6. FOR GENEVA: MISSION IS REQUESTED TO DISCUSS PROPOSED CONFERENCE WITH UNHCR AFRICA CHIEF MORJANE TO ASCERTAIN WHERE THINGS STAND ON PREPARING FOR THE CONFERENCE WITH THE OAU AND TO EMPHASIZE THE USG'S INTEREST IN SEEING FORWARD MOVEMENT ON PLANNING SO THAT THE CONFERENCE CAN BE HELD IN EARLY 1995.

7. FOR USUN: WE ASSUME THAT THE UN SECRETARIAT—PEACEKEEPING DIVISION, POLITICAL AFFAIRS/THE SRSG KHAN, DHA, DILLON, ETC. — WILL ALSO NEED TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING AND THE CONFERENCE ITSELF DESCRIBED IN THE DRAFT UNGA RESOLUTION. MISSION IS REQUESTED TO QUERY THE SECRETARIAT ON HOW IT ENVISIONS ITS ROLE IN ENSURING THE SUCCESS OF THIS CONFERENCE.

8. FOR KIGALI: DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY'S ANALYSIS OF CURRENT GOR ATTITUDES TOWARD REFUGEE RETURN, BEYOND ITS OFT-STATED RHETORIC OF WELCOMING REFUGEES BACK. WHAT SPECIFIC OUTCOMES FROM THE PROPOSED REFUGEE CONFERENCE WOULD THE GOR LIKE TO SEE?

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9. FOR BUJUMBURA: IT WAS NOT CLEAR FROM WASHINGTON DISCUSSIONS WITH BURUNDI FOREIGN MINISTER NGENDAHAYO (REF B) THAT THE GRB IS STILL COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING ITS OWN REFUGEE ISSUES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THIS CONFERENCE. PLEASE ADVISE ON LATEST GRB THINKING AS THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT SETTLES IN

10. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.  
CHRISTOPHER

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